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## AN ART VOL-AU-VENT

BY CLARENCE COOK

*With original illustrations by American artists.*

'Tis a light, playful dish here set before the "kind reader": no pièce-de-résistance, no substantial rib-roast nor succulent tight little leg of lamb; but for all that a handsome affair; and though (to translate the French *vol-au-vent*) a trifle light as air, yet pleasant to the sight, good to the taste, and easy of digestion. It is a dish beneath whose lid of pastry, tid-bits of various sorts are gathered, exciting a mild curiosity; here are chicken, quail, partridge, an olive, a mushroom.

And on this voyage of discovery, how better to lead off than with James G. Tyler's "Westward the Star of Empire takes its Way"—the caravels of Columbus speeding on the road to the New World—one of the pictures born of the Centennial year. To conceive such a subject and to carry out the idea, seems at first



*From a painting by James G. Tyler*

"WESTWARD THE STAR OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY!"

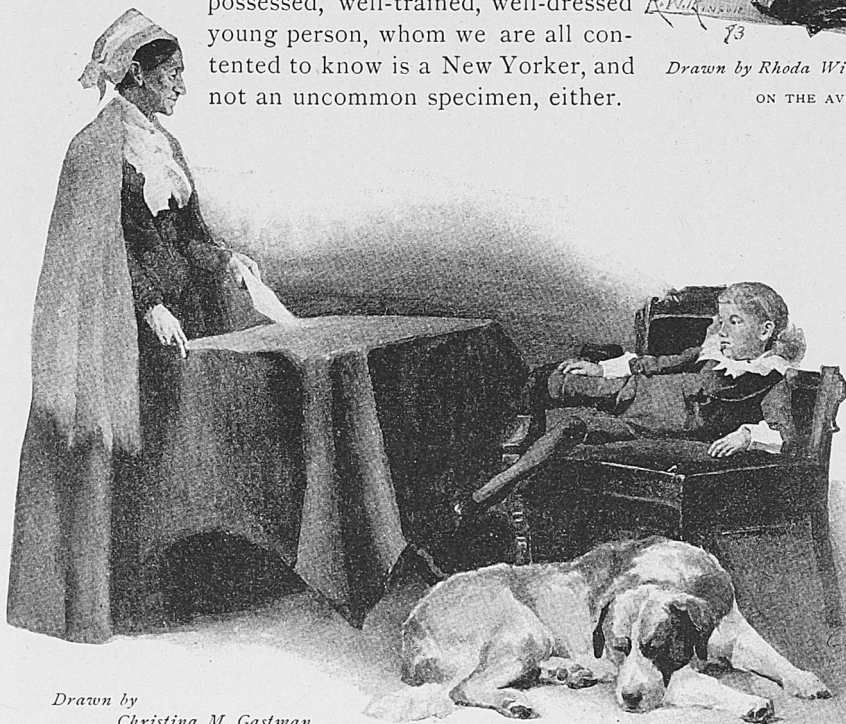
thought an obvious and easy thing to do ; but, however that may be, it was left for Mr. Tyler to show us a way, and he was fortunate ; but an engraving in black and white, no matter how clever, cannot give a fair idea of a picture that depends for part of its charm on its coloring. There was something in the spirit of the picture, a dashing, daring air that was very taking ; it told its own story, needed no title. It was like the Indians in the story : "Are you Columbus ? It's no use, boys, we are discovered !" The easy, confident swing of the lumbering craft ; the flowing water, and the cheerful sky, happy in their mutual share in the enterprise—all this made up a picture that well deserves prosperity.

In her vignette "On the Avenue," Rhoda Wilkinson shows a woman's delicate hand in distinguishing a living lady, a task in which not everyone that essays it succeeds. Miss Wilkinson has not only caught the American air, but the New York air as well, and even a lay-student of the species recognizes the truth of the description without a legend. There is more than one treatment of the subject nowadays, against which I rebel, an insistence on the hard, cynical blasé type of young woman, that may be found possibly somewhere, but we do not like to believe it.

Miss Wilkinson's girl-of-the-period is a healthy, self-possessed, well-trained, well-dressed young person, whom we are all contented to know is a New Yorker, and not an uncommon specimen, either.

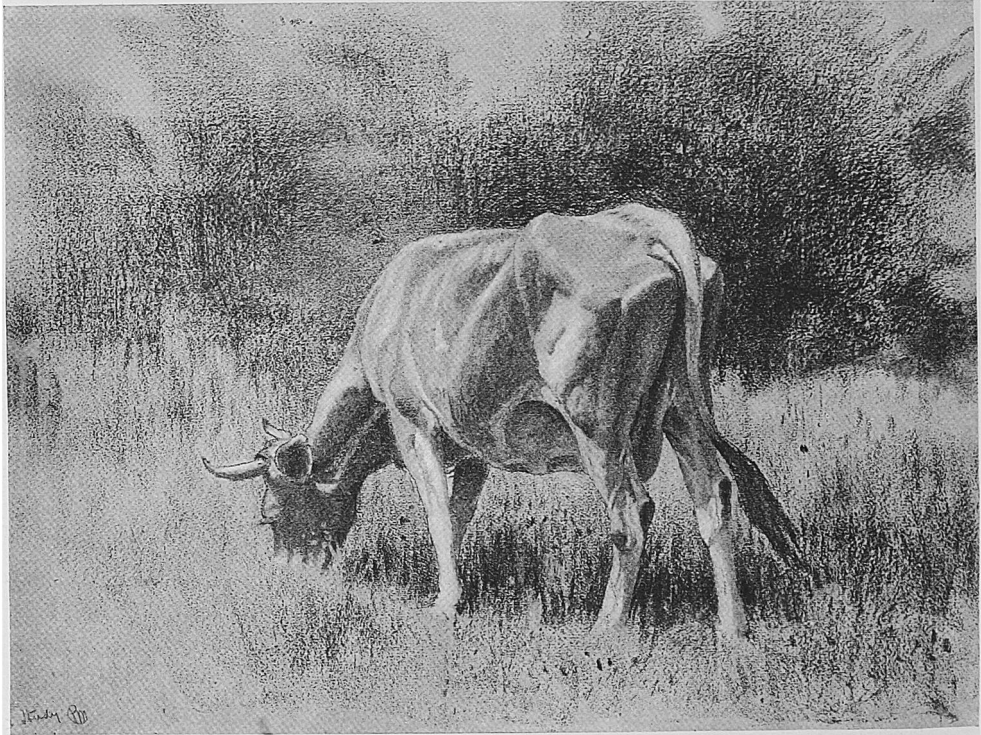


Drawn by Rhoda Wilkinson  
ON THE AVENUE



Drawn by  
Christina M. Gastman

Christina Gastman's "Grandmother" is, if one look closely, not so grim a personage as her rather uncompromising dress would have us believe. Just what little Lord Fol-de-rol has been doing, we do not make out, but his grandmother is really amused internally, and the fact betrays itself by a queer, sub-acid quirk about her mouth, and an invisible uplifting of the eyebrows. We suspect that the paper she holds in her hand contains an attempted sketch of her venerable person, made by the rebellious and half-spoiled child, who reclines—at his ease, shall we say?—but who, whether at ease or not, is plainly in an unrepentant mood. Slight as is the subject, the artist shows no little skill in her treatment of it. We see plainly enough *how* things are, though we may be left to guess *why* they are so. As I have

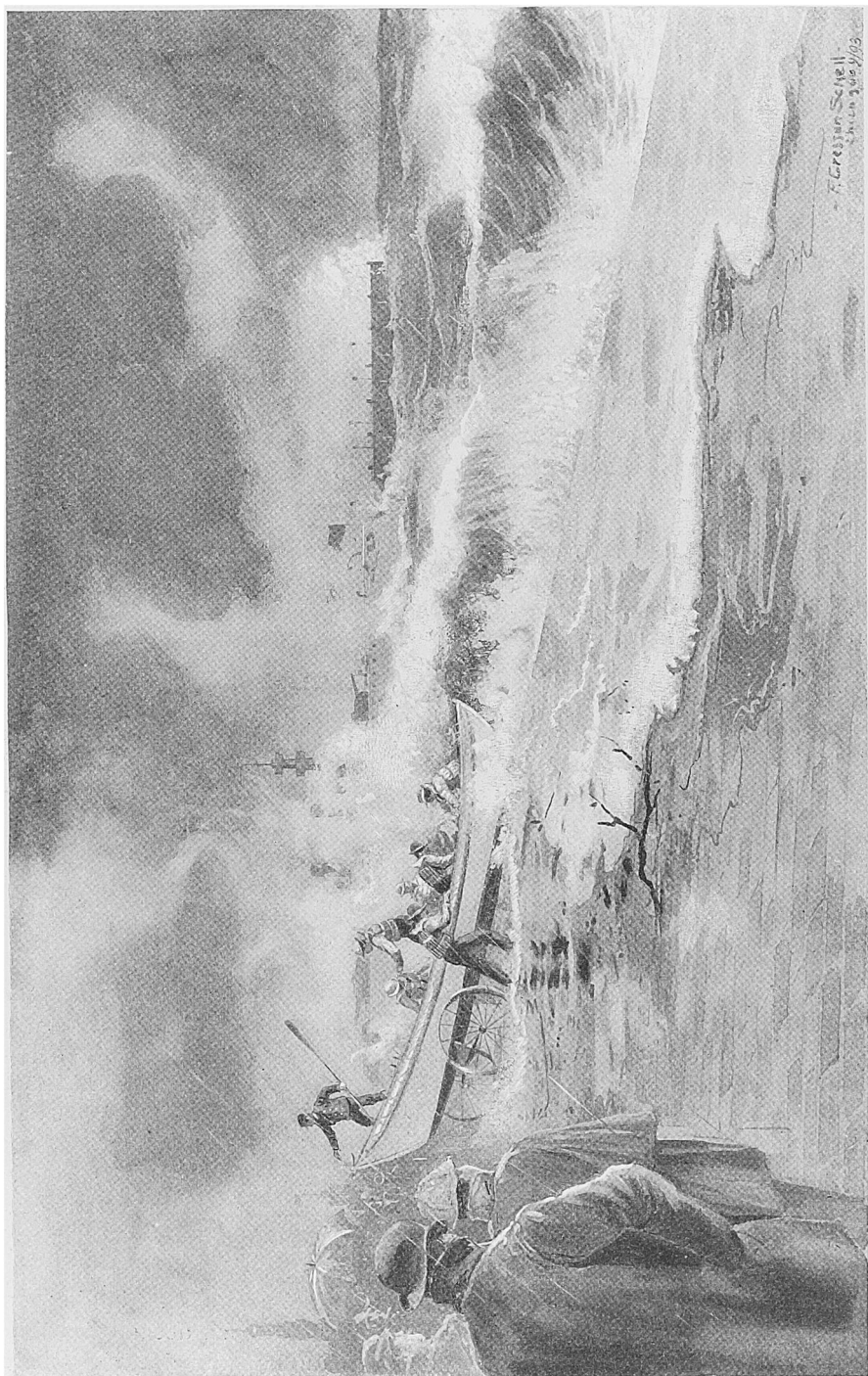


*Drawn by Peter Moran*

"THE COW'S IN THE MEADOW!"

often had occasion to say, this power of quiet expression that goes to the heart of the matter, and knows just where to stop, is one of the most valuable that an artist can possess, and it is uncommon enough to make it very welcome when we meet it. The drowsy dog is also well done. He is as much asleep as a dog ever is; and while he hears all that is saying, and knows that his young master deserves it, he perceives that this is not the proper time for him to betray his sympathies.

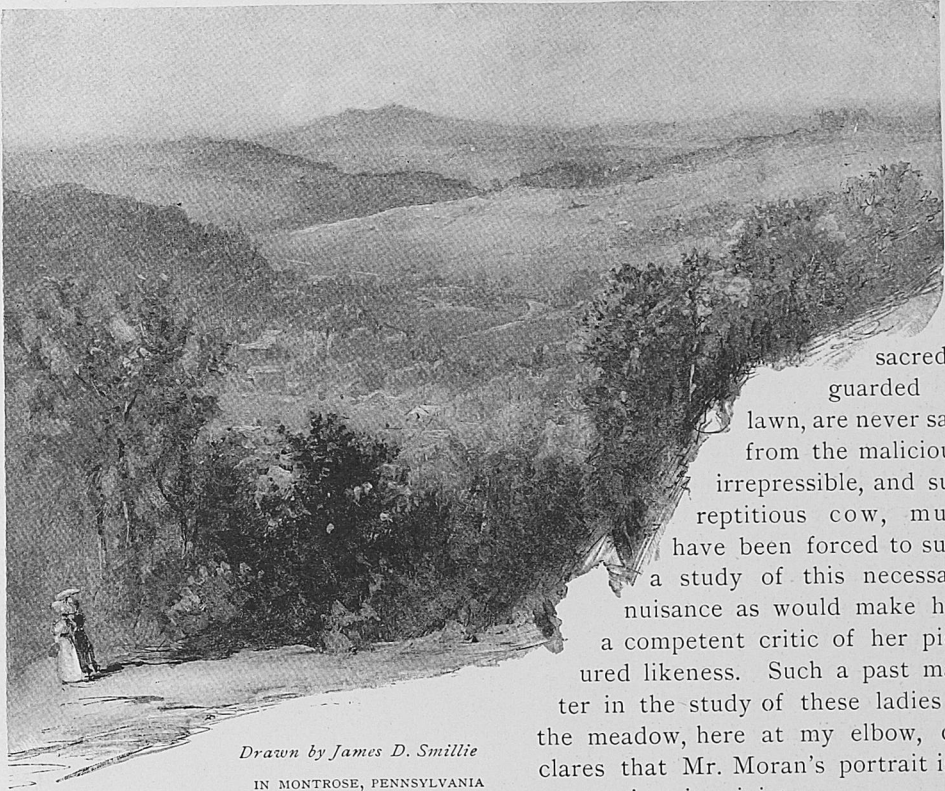
The cow grazing in a meadow is only "a study," as we read in the corner of the plate; but such a study shows training that goes much deeper than the artist's eyes. And there is also much more in it than first-rate drawing—there is life and there is movement to a remarkable degree. Anyone who has lived on a smallish place in the country, where the patch reserved for garden, and the bit



*Drawn by F. Cresson Schell*

LIFE-BOAT DRILL AT CHICAGO





*Drawn by James D. Smillie*  
IN MONTROSE, PENNSYLVANIA

sacredly guarded as lawn, are never safe from the malicious, irrepressible, and surreptitious cow, must have been forced to such a study of this necessary nuisance as would make him a competent critic of her pictured likeness. Such a past master in the study of these ladies of the meadow, here at my elbow, declares that Mr. Moran's portrait is a masterpiece in miniature.

F. Cresson Schell's "Life-boat Drill at Chicago," is a spirited portrayal of what must have been an exciting scene; and it is doubly interesting, because we of the Eastern States have an idea—whether we are really better informed or not—that the Life-saving Service is a thing of the ocean alone. It is hard for one who has not lived near the Great Lakes to realize that they are angry seas as well—as terribly destructive in their storms as the Atlantic; and the Government does well to station its crews along their windy shores. The men in the boat are unfeignedly busy, and they are also really in the boat, a fact worth mentioning, considering how few artists have shown the skill to make us believe their people were in a boat when they said they were. Mr. Schell has also painted a rainy, blustering day; the wind is high, the water bent on mischief, and the artist makes us aware of all this



*Drawn by Harry S. Watson*

"LAWZY! DON'T I RECKOLLECT!"

without the aid of the men in storm-coats in the foreground, or the one umbrella comically out of proportion to the crowd !

The pleasant qualities for which Mr. James D. Smillie has acquired a well-deserved repute, are displayed in the sunshiny picture of the hills of Montrose, in a fashion conventional, it is true, but founded on long and faithful study, and far more respectable, with all its limitations, than much of our art that makes more noise in the doing.

Henry S. Watson has treated, in his "Lawzy ! don't I reckon !" a subject similar to one often painted by Frenchmen : an old hunter, storm-bound and musing before the fire on the good times he has had with his gun. Perhaps, however, the serious expression on the boy's face, and the old man's firm-set mouth, may indicate the telling of some deeper experience—some fight with Indians or border-ruffians. However this may be, the character-drawing and the action and attitudes of the two are well-deserving of cordial praise.

As far as James Symington's sketch is carried, it shows good qualities ; the attitude is natural in itself and true to the character—just so would this girl stand ; and something in the face, half seen in the shadow of the sun-bonnet, implies thoughts that give meaning to the



*Drawn by James Symington*

A NEW ENGLAND MILKMAID

attitude. They both hint at pleased hesitation. What was it that John said as he brought the pail of milk and set it at her side ? And did she name the day ?

In "Love's Crown," H. A. Loop is not an unsuccessful competitor with Coomans and others of the classical tribe, in the field of the old myths and love-stories. What the painting may be like we cannot say, but, so far as conception goes, the picture is not unpleasing, the attitude of the nymph is easy and natural, and the child's action very prettily given.

As all mankind loves a lover, A. J. Keller may be sure that his picture will make itself friends, even though the lover be not as young as is generally thought



*From a painting by H. A. Loof*

LOVE'S CROWN

combined to lead his thoughts and shape his lines without very definite purpose.

Considering how wide the field is, and how various its products, it is remarkable how little has been done among us in the way of genuine caricature of things American. The best have been political, and some few of these were excellent in their way; even they whose withers were wrung might often have laughed in wincing—but the caricatures that live must be both telling and artistic, and even the best of ours have seldom been artistic.

Daumier and Gavarni live by their affinity with the greatest masters of mass and line; they live for us as well as for Frenchmen, even though we cannot en-

desirable by connoisseurs in the matter, nor all that might be wished by an exacting maiden, in looks. Still, there is so much in him, evidently, as suffices to make the lady hesitate, and for every hole she makes in the sod with her parasol, he plants a hope that may take root and bear sweet fruit for him if he cultivate it in patience.

How quiet it is in the wood; you hear the small birds hopping about among the dry leaves, and the squirrel chasing his mate up and down the tree-trunk. A sharp ear might even detect the beating of a young girl's heart!

J. J. Wooding's young woman has struck an easy attitude; her mind is not on her book, but on something for the nonce more interesting. Frank Fithian's "Rural Philosopher"—a combination photograph of Horace Greeley and Walt Whitman—is, of course, nothing but a caricature, or perhaps the pen-play of an idle moment when memory and imagination



*From a painting by Arthur J. Keller*

"WHAT SHALL I SAY?"



tirely enter into their meaning, not being to the manner born, not only, but lacking that intimate knowledge of the events, characters, or characteristics that are satirized, so that we in the United States cannot always see the "point."

Little of what we have thus far produced can hope to live, but we are founding a school of draughtsmen who, if they once come upon the right sort of subject, will certainly produce something of permanent value. There are conditions as yet unfavorable to success. For one thing, there is no good medium for the appeal to the public. The work must be of a purely Laodicean type to get a foothold in any of the orthodox journals. Inasmuch as these journals make their living by pleasing everybody, they dare not run the risk of offending anybody, and good caricature must needs offend somebody.

For another thing, we are as yet too good-natured a people to like any caricature that is too much in earnest.



*Drawn by Frank L. Fithian*

A RURAL PHILOSOPHER



*Drawn by J. J. Wooding*

LOOKING DOWN UPON YOU.

The main difficulty, however, as I view it, is that we have not yet produced the talent that is needed for real success in this line of work. We want an artist who is working like Daumier, Gavarni, or Cruikshank, to please himself, not to please an employer; to express his own thought, not to put into shape the thoughts of another. And he must be an artist, as well, who can give value to his work as art.

We have more than one draughtsman with a true sense of humor, who can give point to a legend, can tell an anecdote with just the right expression, but on the artistic side their work, all clever as it is, has little value. Yet we are now ripe for the right man, and his coming would be welcome.